



Testimony of: Cara Mackler, Manager of Campus Education, Training & Outreach  
Women's Center of Greater Danbury

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

**Testimony in favor of HB 6374, An Act Concerning Sexual Misconduct on College Campuses**

February 12, 2021

Good day, Senator Haskell, Representative Elliott, and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. My name is Cara Mackler and I am the Legislative Liaison and Manager of Campus Education, Training & Outreach at the Women's Center of Greater Danbury. We provide free and confidential services to domestic violence and sexual assault victims in 13 towns in the Greater Danbury area including Bethel, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Danbury, Kent, New Fairfield, New Milford, Newtown, Redding, Ridgefield, Roxbury, Sherman, and Washington. We are a member organization of the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence.

I support HB 6374, An Act Concerning Sexual Misconduct on College Campuses. Thank you for raising this important bill.

I work at our satellite office at Western Connecticut State University and the Danbury campus of Naugatuck Valley Community College. Many of the student survivors I work with feel their voices are not always heard on their campus. It is vital for survivors' voices to be at the forefront of change on college campuses; they have experienced the systems first-hand and can provide invaluable feedback and insight into how to better serve student survivors and ensure their safety throughout their time at their college or university. This bill would help students' voices be heard and valued.

Many college students who experience sexual violence are incapacitated due to alcohol or other substances at the time of their assault. Perpetrators often use alcohol or other substances to facilitate the violence, often with the purpose of debilitating the victim. However, if the victim or a witness is underage, they often fear the consequences of reporting if they have to disclose that they were under the influence of alcohol or other substances. This creates a deterrent and barrier that prevents many students from safely accessing support services on campus. This bill would remove that barrier and help students to safely report sexual misconduct without fear of disciplinary action.

Students already face so many barriers when reporting their incidents of sexual misconduct; they often fear they won't be believed, fear for their safety, fear retaliation, and fear the re-traumatization of reliving the incident by reporting. So many students and survivors are silenced, forced to live in their trauma alone with little to no support due to these fears and possible consequences by coming forward about the crime committed against them. This bill would create one less barrier for student survivors to come forward.

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Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony before the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Cara Mackler

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